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Classroom teachers styles of using and development materials of inclusive education

Yelkin Diker Coşkun^{a*}, Ülkü Tosun^a, Esra Macaroğlu^a^a*Yeditepe Üniversitesi, Kayışdağı Kampüsü, İstanbul 34755, Turkey*

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Abstract

Teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom may be regarded as a challenge for teachers accustomed to teaching in the regular classroom; therefore teachers should require the basic characteristics of effective teaching. The use of educational materials makes learning and comprehension easier for students at all levels. For students who have learning difficulties, educational materials are more important. In this research study, it is aimed to determine classroom teachers' ways to choose, develop, and use of instructional materials for inclusion students in their classes. It is also important to support the development of inclusion programs by using the knowledge gathered in this research study. Qualitative and quantitative data collected throughout the research study display the inefficiency of teachers to develop and use instructional materials for inclusion students.

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1. Introduction

The quality of education given to students who are in need of special education is gaining importance day by day. For this reason, new education centers are being founded; new studies are being conducted and adapted in public life. Inclusive education is a part of these studies. Equality of opportunity and normalization is the basic philosophy of inclusion. In this sense, inclusion which has its roots from the principle of equality of opportunity and normalization is defined as the process of unifying children who are disabled with otherwise normal educational and social development.

Also "Inclusive education - according to UNESCO means that the school provides good education to all pupils irrespective of their varying abilities. All children will be treated with respect and ensured equal opportunities to

*Yelkin Diker Coşkun
E-mail address: ydiker@yeditepe.edu.tr

learn together. Inclusive education is an on-going process. Teachers must work actively and deliberately to reach its goals” (UNESCO, 2007).

Teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom may be regarded as a challenge for teachers accustomed to teaching in the regular classroom. Therefore, teachers should require the basic characteristics of effective teaching. To be a successful teacher in inclusive classrooms is not easy because in such cases the teacher is dealing with different abilities. Most of the effective teaching evidence comes from the research which involves the classrooms directly using several different techniques (Westwood, 1995, Sakarneh, 2004).

Both the classroom teachers and the subject teachers should have some important qualifications in order to provide successful inclusive education. Such qualities can be listed as; knowing the principles of inclusive education and implementing them, figuring out the individuals who are in need of special education, knowing and being able to apply the methods and approaches in the inclusive education field, assessing and testing in a healthy environment (Battal, 2007). The extent of how beneficial the pre-service education of the classroom teachers will be regarding the implementation of inclusive education can be understood by the help of analyzing their abilities in terms of preparing the education environment and implementation. Naturally, all teachers are expected to employ their basic professional qualifications during implementation. However, especially in the inclusive education implementation, knowledge level of the teachers is observed to be disqualified and integrated students’ being in the classroom is accepted as adequate. To some extent, teachers’ having lack of knowledge and materials regarding inclusive education is the reason of this situation (Diker, Tosun, 2008).

Including the students with disabilities and having the knowledge of how to treat them are important characteristics of the effective school, and in this regard, Ainscow indicated that the effective school has effective leadership and staff who are able to deal with all students and their needs, is optimistic that all the students can progress and develop their abilities toward successful achievement, has a willingness to support its staff by meeting their needs taking into account the curriculum, and ensuring that the curriculum meets all the students needs by effectively reviewing its programmes (teachers, curriculum, students progress), frequently making sure there is progress in terms of the effective teacher. Successful teachers challenge the students’ abilities by setting good quality tasks, providing students with opportunities to choose their tasks, varying learning strategies and providing facilities that contribute to student learning (Ainscow, 1991 akt, Sakarneh, 2004).

Use of materials has been the basis for equality of opportunities in the process of education. In other words, it provides the opportunity to present the educational environment which is improved and enriched by the help of every kind of educational technology to all people in every part of the country and the world. As a result, everybody will have the chance to have high quality education. By the help of the educational technology, equality of opportunity problems in our country can be prevented (İşman, 2005). Educational materials are the tools that enrich the learning process and make the learning concrete. The fact, research indicates that educational materials have positive effects on making education effective. Educational materials are elements that teachers can not overlook such as: facilitating the process of learning and providing permanence of what is learned.

The materials that the classroom teachers use differ. Analysis indicated them to be: student’s book, worksheets, models, posters, etc. In recent years there have been some positive improvements regarding the use of educational materials as a result of the ministry of education and publication companies’ support in our country. However, these improvements are not enough for the students who need special support and the teachers working with them. Inclusive education is used in the same meaning with placing the students who need special education with other students at the same age in the same classes (Sucuoğlu, 2006).

The rights of students with special needs to be educated in an inclusive classroom rather than educating them in an isolated environment has been a main concern raising issues and interest for educators, policy-makers and researchers in recent times and eventually became the basic issue in terms of teaching students with special needs. Effective school and teachers characteristics influence positively students’ achievements and outcomes in an inclusive classrooms, school characteristics such as: qualified leadership, learning environment, high expectation, positive reinforcement, monitoring student’s progress and parent-school co-operation. Teacher characteristics such as: efficient use of time; good relationships with students; providing positive feedback; having a high student success rate; and in general providing support for students with and without disabilities (Sakarneh, 2004). The resources of teachers who are employed for inclusive education are usually inadequate in terms of materials development. For this reason some of the classroom teachers prefer to use the materials that they have developed

themselves. During the inclusive education teachers come across some difficulties and they have to produce solutions to overcome them (Sucuoğlu, 2006).

Use of materials in education eases the perception and learning for students at all levels. This is especially true for students who have difficulty in learning. The teacher should use the appropriate materials to make the learning process concrete, to practice and revise, and to increase the participation of the students into the learning process. This situation helps the inclusive learners to have observable and concrete learning during the process. The most important part of material in the inclusive education is the selection and preparation of the material. In this process which the teachers have to create solutions themselves, factors such as the characteristics of the inclusive learner, the easiness or difficulty level of preparing a material are influential. It is important to analyze and evaluate the solutions that the teachers create themselves regarding materials preparation and implementation and sharing with the other partners in the field.

2. Aim of the Research

This research study aims to investigate the material chosen, material development and material use of classroom teachers who have students with special needs in their class. It is also aimed to make additions to the development of “individualized education programs” (IEP) of special needs students.

3. Methods

Mixed methods were used (quantitative and qualitative) based on survey results to describe the current situation in classes with special needs students. Sixty classroom teachers participated in this research study. Schools were randomly selected but research participants were chosen according to their experience with students having special needs. Data was collected through the administration of a questionnaire developed by researchers, with the purpose of understanding classroom teachers’:

Material choose

Material development

Material use and evaluation of materials

In addition to what is going on in class in terms of instructional materials, to understand the situation more clearly, a semi-structured interview protocol was designed and ten of the participants were interviewed.

4. Participants

37 classroom teachers from 17 elementary schools in Kadikoy, Bakirkoy and Esenyurt regions of İstanbul participated in this research study. All elementary teachers participated into research had inclusive classrooms for students with special needs.

Table1. Demographical Information related to the Teachers

Gender		Title				Type of School		Education Condition		
Female	Male	1-10 years	11-20 years	21-30 years	31+years	State	Private	Education Faculty	Fen-Edeb. Faculty	Voc. School
27	10	18	13	4	2	24	13	25	4	7

Differences among participants’ gender, education level, and years they worked as teachers help researchers to generalize the knowledge gathered from participants. Table 1 show that most of the participants work in state schools between 1-20 years and graduated faculty of education.

Table 2. Information on the Inclusion Students

Inclusion Type	Number of Students
Attention Deficit	26
Hyperactivity	14
Learning Disability	18
Autism	3
Lack of Hearing	3
Lack of Speaking	7
Physical problem	7
Gifted	1

37 teachers reported having 52 inclusion students. When the inclusion students' qualities were analyzed, results indicated that there was an excessive number of the students with problems such as: attention deficit, hyperactivity, and learning difficulty and the fact that inclusion students typically have more than one problem.

5. Data Analysis

Given that both quantitative and qualitative data were collected in this study, there were two types of data analyses. Demographic information about the teachers who participated in the survey was analyzed as frequencies and percentages, in a quantitative manner. On the other hand, participants' views related to the open-ended questions were analyzed in a qualitative manner.

6. Findings and Discussion

Information related to the responses given to the form of "Material development and Types of Use in the Inclusion Education are given below

Tablo 3. Findings related to the level of teachers in using and developing inclusive education materials

Items related to the Inclusive Education	Always	Some times	Seldom	Never
Level of reaching to the inclusive education materials	3	7	12	14
Level of existence of the Inclusive materials at school	3	4	11	18
Level of external support for the inclusive student	4	5	10	18
Level of belief in supportive education	26	7	3	8
Level of preparation of the Individualized Education Program	13	5	12	6
Level of making supportive education	12	13	18	-
Level of using materials related to inclusive education	4	8	11	13

It is seen that the teachers who took part in the research are insufficient in reaching the education materials. Some of the teachers indicated that this situation was related to the fact that the school, or the education system was not providing the sufficient amount of materials, and the ministry of education was not informing them about the progresses in this field in the open-ended questions related to this article. For example, *"if the ministry of ... sends materials to our school, our access to these students will be easier."* Teachers indicated also that the school possibilities were also inadequate in inclusion materials. Especially, the teachers mentioned in the open-ended questions that there was not a specific room reserved for the students participating in the individual education programme in the schools. For example, *"I am borrowing the toys of the nursery class, but we do not have a room for the individual education programme."* *"It should be better that there be a room for the individual education programme, and the necessary education tools in that room."* *"there is not a separate equipment where the teacher should share the studies related to the individual education programme and conduct a separate study with the student."*

Some teachers indicate that they ask some foundations to find instructional materials for their students of special needs. But most think even if they reach the material, they can not buy it due to financial inadequacies. An excerpt from a participant explains what teachers do most of the time. *"..I try to make it simple. But I can't make all the time.sometimes I cut some pictures for her and stick these pictures to her notebooks and I sit with her during mathematics lesson I use whatever I find"*.

Some teachers reported that they rarely ask for professional help (from psychologist, counselor, or special education teacher) in solving the problems related with education, adaptation, and health. This situation shows that teachers go through an educational process without counting the developmental and social needs of their students of inclusion. Data display that most teachers need some guidance from Guidance Research Centers of Ministry of

National Education. Teachers emphasize the need for interaction among parents, teachers, and Guidance Research Centers by stating that “...parents need to be guided by other than teachers. As a teacher, I may not be sufficient for the family and the child. Guidance Research Centers need to interact with parents and teachers...”.

Teachers believe that students in inclusive classrooms need out of school programs to support their education. This belief shows their awareness about the need for inclusion. But there are also some other teachers having negative attitudes towards inclusion and state its unnecessary. Their attitude towards inclusion is displayed in the following excerpt. “I disagree with the idea of inclusion. Students with special needs need to go to a completely different school designed for them, not to a different class...teachers are not able to do that inclusion. Therefore it makes elementary education weak”. The excerpt implies that some teachers did not understand the purpose of inclusion.

Teachers state their feeling of inefficiency in developing Individualized Educational Programs as another important problem in inclusion. They perceive the lack of knowledge, intensity of classes, inefficiencies in class, and work load as the reasons of that difficulty. Despite all these factors, they all do some supportive work to help their students, even if it is not so frequent. Data about the use of instructional material show inadequacy in use. Answers to open-ended questions also support this situation. Although they know the importance of material use, they state some problems in getting them by also stating their lack of knowledge about the issue.

7. Conclusion

Research study reports teachers’ awareness about the importance of using instructional materials for their students with special needs. Teachers argue that they can not get sufficient help from Guidance Research Centers and guidance and counseling services in schools. Teachers’ lack of knowledge about instructional materials for inclusion students may lower their sense of efficacy. This can be solved in teacher training institutions by including some courses about “special education” and “its applications” in the programs. Additionally, materials developed by teachers need to be examined and evaluated then distributed to other teachers by Guidance Research Centers. Teachers also need to get a professional support from psychologists and special education specialists. There needs to be also in-service training sessions for teachers, to make them understand the nature and purpose of inclusion.

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